

**New Program Proposal
Children's Law Center
University of South Carolina – Columbia**

Summary

USC-Columbia requests approval to transform the “Children’s Law Office” (CLO) into a Center to be known as the “Children’s Law Center,” to be implemented immediately upon approval.

The proposal was approved by the University of South Carolina’s Board of Trustees on December 12, 2005. A major purpose of CHE approval of centers is to permit institutions sponsoring them to seek funding for them from the General Assembly. The proposal was submitted to the Commission on August 16, 2006. It was reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs without substantive comment and voted upon favorably on October 11, 2006.

The Children’s Law Office was founded in 1995 to promote community awareness and increased professional knowledge of children’s legal issues and to improve the administration of justice in children’s cases. According to the proposal, the status as a Center would symbolize both excellence in legal education and the application of children’s law. Center status would enhance the Children’s Law Office’s current professional standing and growth as a statewide organization that provides extensive education and training programs. The Center also will facilitate numerous child-related professional organizations and will sponsor research-based projects. The Center will help train new family court judges under the direction of the Supreme Court, and will help train practicing attorneys and guardians *ad litem* through the South Carolina Bar Association, and through state agencies and local law enforcement agencies, the Center will train case workers and officers who appear in court.

The proposed Center will contribute to the public service mission of the University of South Carolina-Columbia. According to the proposal, the Center will continue to be administered by the School of Law. The proposed Center will be the only program of its type in South Carolina. The Center will be distinguished from other programs at the USC campus, such as the Institute for Families in Society and the Center for Child and Family Studies, by its focus on children’s *legal* issues.

The proposed Center will provide non-credit bearing training programs for practitioners of law and law enforcement. It will offer its assistance to the School of Law in curriculum planning regarding children's law.

The Children's Law Office at USC-Columbia currently has 19 staff members who will be adequate in the proposed Children's Law Center. Additional programs in the future on children's mental health and children with disabilities, will require two additional resource attorneys. Additional administrative, development, and grants management staff are also contemplated. There will be two administrators (2 FTE), no faculty (0 FTE), and 24 staff (24 FTE) serving the new Center. In the first five years, a total of nine new staff members (10 FTE) will be hired, which includes increasing two existing positions from part-time to full-time.

The Center will be located on the Columbia Campus. All offices are filled, but space is available through the reconfiguration of partitions and costs are expected to be minimal and will be provided through grants and contracts. No major equipment will be needed for the proposed Center.

The current Children's Law Office has an annual operating budget of \$1.4 million, based on sponsored awards. The current CLO receives various federal and foundation grants for the provision of training and services. The largest portion of the budget is covered by federal funds, including a Children's Justice Act grant, Title IV-E training funds, and juvenile justice grants provided through the Department of Justice. The proposed Center would continue to contract with state agencies for training programs.

In summary, USC-Columbia has proposed a change in the status of the Children's Law Office to that of a "Center". The Center aspires to symbolize excellence in legal education and the application of children's law. Sources of current funding for the Center are federal grants and state contracts. The designation of a Center would provide preferred status for the Children's Law Office in seeking grants and contracts. Center status is requested to allow future requests for state funding, although such funding will not be requested at least until 2011.

Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commend favorably to the Commission approval of the Children's Law Center at the University of South Carolina-Columbia, to be implemented immediately upon Commission approval.